

'Transitional Living Center' in need of supporting funds

By DEBORAH PETERSON
Of the Emerald

The Women's Transitional Living Center (WTLC) in Eugene offers the only group care home for women prison inmates in Oregon not directly connected with the corrections system. Despite admissions at the county, state, and federal levels that WTLC is a worthwhile program, funds have not been forthcoming to support it.

"While most governmental agencies have said that our program is good," stated Katherine Eaton, WTLC's board chairman, "They say they have no money to give us. They have claimed time and time again that responsibility for funding WTLC lies with another governmental agency."

Most recently, on Nov. 13, the Lane County Commissioners rejected a funding request by

WTLC because of a tight budget.

"This came as a surprise to us," said Mrs. Eaton. "It had been our understanding that the commissioners accepted in principle the premise of funding us. The question, as we understood it, was how much money we would receive."

The recent county recommendation to deny WTLC funding was made by Robert Elfres, director of the Department of

General Administration. Mr. Elfres, according to Mrs. Eaton, did not attend previous meetings in which the commissioners had said they accepted the concept of WTLC and discussed the appropriation of \$2,500 for the year to WTLC. This sum amounts to approximately \$3.50 per day per woman.

"Since WTLC provides an alternative to established institutions, it was our feeling that

we should receive funds from the same sources they do," Mrs. Eaton explained. "Our expenses are also considerably less than institutional costs. We have found, however, that while the state feels that WTLC should be funded at the county level, the county feels we are a state responsibility."

"While we have applied to the Lane Council of Governments for Law Enforcement Agency funds, they have refused to cooperate, nor will they include us in their budget requests," commented Mrs. Eaton.

Initially, WTLC received \$12,000 from the federal government to begin operations. The money was granted with the understanding that further financial aid would be provided by other state and local groups.

"We have been fortunate to receive a Jackson Foundation grant of \$56,000. Community support has enabled us to match this grant, a stipulation for receiving the foundation funds. This has given us enough money to survive until next July."

Mrs. Eaton does not feel, however, that the community should have to bear the entire weight of WTLC support.

WTLC has a contract with the state that reads the "state will cause to be paid to" WTLC the amount of \$3.50 a day for each woman. This money is currently coming out of individual educational trust funds provided for each woman through various sources.

The average house stay for each woman is 4 months and educational funds for her are \$800. By the time she leaves WTLC, the money is gone.

"The financial bind this puts our women in could lead them right back into trouble," Mrs. Eaton stated. "While the women are happy with the program, they feel they have little money to work with."

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